

The Nebraska Commission of 150: Charting Our Course for the Next 25 Years



As the University of Nebraska-Lincoln prepares to celebrate its 150th anniversary, it also looks ahead to envision the future. UNL has a long and enviable record of distinction in higher education. At its founding UNL was the first graduate school west of the Mississippi River, and the university has pursued discovery and innovation ever since. Today, UNL is the western most university in the Big 10. Our unique location continues to shape our mission and give UNL distinctive opportunities and advantages. The Nebraska Commission of 150 will lead an inclusive process of envisioning an ambitious future for UNL over the next 25 years and identifying the initiatives necessary to fulfill that goal. The N|150 Commission includes faculty, students, staff, and leaders from the campus and communities UNL serves.

What is the best, most ambitious future UNL can create for its students and society? The N|150 goal should be bold, distinctive, inspirational, and universally understood. The goal and the plan to achieve it will emerge from broad-based discussions across the campus. Some preliminary ideas about the university's major goals include:

- ❖ Provide the best student experience in the Big 10 for academic and personal growth;
- ❖ Engage students with communities beyond the university throughout their studies in ways that enhance their learning and contribute to society;
- ❖ Produce graduates whose leadership, discoveries, and innovations shape society;
- ❖ Generate new knowledge and innovations that positively transform the future of society;
- ❖ Connect the university with Lincoln, communities across Nebraska, and beyond in ways so deep and meaningful that the boundary between UNL and the communities it serves is imperceptible;
- ❖ Retain the personal atmosphere at UNL, leverage the growing diversity of Nebraska and the nation, and harness the tremendous work ethic of the students, faculty and staff;
- ❖ Foster connections throughout UNL to reduce silos and deepen intellectual collaboration;
- ❖ Find ways to make UNL as responsive to change and efficient as possible; and
- ❖ Leverage the unique research strengths of UNL to address grand challenges of our world.

Ultimately, the Nebraska Commission of 150 must define what the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will mean in the mid-21st century, and how UNL will meet emerging needs in ways that are meaningful to its students and to society. The objective should be broadly and deeply transformative, so that UNL leaps to a new level of innovation and impact. *How will you help UNL envision and make the leap?*

Everyone can contribute to the N|150 process and there will be numerous opportunities throughout 2018 where you can share your vision for UNL's future. As N|150 begins everyone who cares about UNL should reflect on the university's potential and consider key questions about the future including:

- In 10+ years what backgrounds, experiences, and expectations will students likely bring to UNL? What will students expect 10+ years from now in terms of their learning and overall experience? What knowledge, skills, and experiences will employers seek? And, how can UNL adapt in the near term to meet these anticipated needs in compelling ways?
- Are there alternative structures UNL should consider for undergraduate education? What content, curricular structures, and modes of delivery would best prepare future students?
- What should be the hallmarks of graduate and professional education at UNL?
- How can UNL foster more discovery and innovation on campus, and deepen its societal impact?

Several recent planning activities at UNL provide a crucial foundation for N|150, and summaries of those efforts conclude this document. These reports are foundational for the N|150 process, and work to address their recommendations is already underway. The Nebraska Commission of 150 as well as everyone engaged in the planning process, whether on campus or in the communities UNL serves, should utilize the work of these reports and build on their findings when considering the future success of the university and how best to make the leap to new heights of innovation and impact.

The N|150 process is described below in detail, including the structure of The Nebraska Commission of 150, the questions that will guide its work, and a timeline for the planning process.

The Nebraska Commission of 150

The Nebraska Commission of 150 is an inclusive team of faculty staff, students, senior campus leaders, alumni, and community leaders. The 150 Commission will work through its subcommittees to create the specific elements of the campus plan for the next 25 years. An Executive Committee of faculty and campus leaders will guide the N|150 process by drawing on the work of the larger Commission and input from a wide array of stakeholders to determine the overarching goals, gather and integrate the work of the Commission and its subcommittees, and ensure the timely completion of the plan.

Executive Committee Charge

Articulate the vision of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, the expectations we share for the university in Nebraska and in higher education, and the overarching goal(s) the university seeks to achieve in the next 25 years. The 150 Executive Committee will lead the N|150 process and guide the development of key elements of the plan including initiatives and the key metrics by which fulfillment of the goal(s) will be gauged. Individual members of the Executive Committee will either serve on the Mission and Values subcommittee or co-chair one of the other subcommittees. The N|150 Executive Committee will ensure that the Commission accomplishes its work in a timely way and with robust input from a broad range of stakeholders.

N|150 Subcommittees

Each subcommittee of the 150 Commission will focus on a key area of the University’s work and will be led by co-chairs, at least one of whom will serve as a member of the 150 Executive Committee. The subcommittees will provide timely input to the strategic planning process, based on the expertise of the members and input from a broad range of stakeholders. The N|150 Subcommittees are:

- Mission and Values
- Student Experience
- Research, Scholarship and Creativity
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Engagement in Nebraska and Beyond
- Economic Development and Innovation
- Internal Operations and Infrastructure
- Campus Community and the Role of Faculty and Staff

The charges for each subcommittee are included below, along with key questions to guide their work.

Mission and Values

Articulate a future-oriented, over-arching mission statement and core values that encapsulate the shared vision of UNL. These statements, and the goal(s) they encompass for the future, will be the focus of the N|150 plan. Guiding questions:

- What are the UNL's goals? How can this be expressed in the clearest, most compelling way possible in a N|150 mission statement?
- What values must guide the university in its pursuit of its goals?
- What key attributes does UNL need to develop to realize these goals?
- What over-arching metrics will the university use to gauge progress toward the N|150 goals?

Student Experience

Define both the academic and cultural elements of student life, combining a focus on the learning experiences, personal growth, and outcomes the university seeks for students with the ways students should experience learning and participate in the campus community. Guiding questions:

- What knowledge areas, experiences, and skillsets will students likely need 10+ years from now?
- How can UNL provide a transformative, life-changing education and personal growth experience for students without burdensome levels of student debt?
- What attributes will students need to succeed at all degree levels?
- What organizational capacities will UNL need to support their learning?
- What key metrics will be most useful in ensuring the efficacy and quality of student learning and the student experience at UNL?
- What role should community engagement, experiential learning, internships, and other off-campus active learning play in student learning at UNL?
- How can UNL promote student achievement from day one?
- How can UNL ensure that every student gains a meaningful, diverse network and the skills to leverage that network before graduation?

Research, Scholarship and Creativity

Identify the attributes UNL needs to deepen and extend its capacity for discovery. In particular, determine the kind of campus culture, rewards, recognition, and organizational support that will be necessary to support enhanced discovery and creation on campus. Consider how graduate students' academic work should manifest itself in theses, dissertations or other capstones. Guiding questions:

- How can UNL foster collaboration across disciplines to enhance discovery and innovation?
- What should UNL's community expectations be for quality in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, for faculty and students alike?
- What incentives, rewards, and research supports are needed to enhance research, scholarship and creative activities on campus?
- What are the most relevant measures of achievement for research and creativity at UNL?
- What can UNL do to fully value and support all fields of discovery, creativity, and innovation?
- What should the future of doctoral education look like at UNL? How should doctoral education be structured and supported, and what career paths should students prepare for after doctoral study?
- How can UNL become a leader in research communication?

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are central to fulfilling UNL's mission and achieving future excellence. Ensuring that all are welcome at UNL is critically important for the success of the university. This subcommittee will build on the recommendations in the Halualani Diversity Mapping Report and

determine how UNL can harness the increasing diversity of Nebraska and the U.S. to enhance the education it offers, and the prospects Huskers have throughout their careers. It must be clear to everyone in the UNL community that each person has something to gain from and offer to the university community. Guiding questions:

- How can UNL establish, grow and develop a campus that is open to a diversity of experience, beliefs, and viewpoints expressed in a civil manner?
- How can the university increase efforts to intentionally recruit and retain diverse international and domestic students, faculty, and staff?
- How can UNL develop a welcoming and supportive environment?
- What can UNL do to promote compassion and empathy and citizenship in students, faculty and staff, and to ensure that every student benefits from the rich diversity of the university and society?
- What can UNL do to encourage more women and people of color into university leadership roles?

Engagement in Nebraska and Beyond

Identify ways for the UNL campus community to deepen engagement with communities across Nebraska, nationally and globally. Alumni engagement is critical, as are partnerships with community groups, civic organizations, governments and any other relationships that connect faculty and students with diverse communities and aligning campus-based research and creative activities with societal needs. Guiding questions:

- How can UNL foster enduring affinity for and connections with the university?
- What barriers limit UNL's ability to partner effectively and how can these barriers be eliminated or lowered?
- What capacities does the university need to create and sustain connections with external stakeholders that support student recruitment, experiential learning, and job placement?
- What reciprocal benefits do UNL's partners yield and how can these foster more extensive, deeper connections?
- How can UNL ensure dissemination of research to relevant communities?
- What measures are most useful for tracking engagement with the university?

Economic Development and Innovation

Identify economic development needs that offer the greatest opportunities for UNL to enhance the prosperity of Nebraska and other communities it serves. Ensure alignment between those needs and both the research capacity of the university and its academic programs. Particularly important for this subcommittee is the process by which discovery and innovation at UNL transfer to the wider community, and how UNL can forecast societal needs and meet them proactively through the education it provides. Guiding questions:

- What mechanisms can UNL develop to ensure its degree programs meet the societal needs of tomorrow and the coming years?
- What additional commercialization and/or technology transfer capacities does UNL need?
- What role should the Nebraska Innovation Campus play in UNL's economic development activities?

Internal Operations and Infrastructure

Organizational effectiveness and the physical and technological infrastructure on which the university depends will be the focus of this subcommittee. This includes recruitment and retention of faculty and staff aligned with the university's needs and fulfillment of its goals. Optimizing the university's organizational structures, physical facilities, and information technology are also critical elements of this subcommittee's work. Guiding questions:

- If UNL’s organizational structure was being created now, what would it need to look like to serve likely future needs?
- What characteristics will the university need in the next decade in its people, organizational structures, and infrastructure?
- Do UNL’s current structure and internal systems foster or inhibit positive change? If they are inhibitors, how can they be adapted or otherwise changed to foster innovation?
- What mechanisms for the collection and effective use of data in decision-making will best serve the university’s needs in the coming years?
- What academic and social practices would best support improved retention?
- How can UNL foster greater internal transparency and trust?
- As details of the N|150 plan emerge, what do internal operations need to look like to support those goals? What operational barriers exist to *the leap*?

Campus Community and the Role of Faculty and Staff

This subcommittee will articulate the characteristics of the university’s culture going forward and, in particular, the role(s) of faculty and staff as leaders of the campus community. Identifying the principles and aspirations that should underpin the community, the mechanisms by which this culture is created and maintained (including incentives and rewards), and the role faculty and staff play in creating and sustaining this ethos. Guiding questions:

- What would it take for every faculty member and every staff member to relish their role at UNL and prefer it over any other options?
- What systems of incentives and rewards for faculty and staff will best ensure alignment the N|150 goals?
- What modes of communication and standards of transparency in decision-making should be hallmarks of the university?
- What are the faculty’s roles as intellectual and community leaders?
- To what extent should faculty roles be differentiated by their focus on teaching, research and service? Should every faculty play all of these roles, or should UNL foster differentiated roles?

The N|150 process

The Nebraska Commission of 150 will engage the university community in a process of envisioning what UNL can accomplish in the next 25 years and how it can achieve those goals. The process will include the widest-possible range of communities within the university, across Nebraska, and beyond, as UNL defines its future.

The N|150 goal should go beyond incremental change to transform the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in meaningful ways, and the resulting plan should clearly convey how the university will *make the leap* and accomplish this transformational vision.

How will you help UNL envision and make the leap? Beginning in April 2018 the Commission will engage the campus community in defining the goal. Once the goal is clearly articulated, detailed plans for accomplishing the goal will develop over the summer and into the autumn, with opportunities throughout the process for everyone to contribute their ambitions for the university and their ideas for creating the next possible future for UNL.

The N|150 process, as outlined in the timeline below, is designed to promote wide-spread engagement in developing the goal and continued, robust engagement as detailed planning ideas emerge and are refined.

Spring 2018

Initial development of planning ideas:

- The N|150 Commission began development of key ideas in March
- Outreach events for on-campus stakeholders in April
- The Commission will build on feedback from outreach and articulate the goal in May

Summer 2018

Refinement of planning ideas:

- The N|150 Commission will develop initial strategies for achieving the goal
- Online feedback on planning ideas will be sought from the university community during the summer

Fall 2018

Broad-based input and finalization of the N|150 plan

- Outreach to a wide range of on-campus and off-campus constituencies will occur in the autumn to seek input on the draft N|150 plan
- The N|150 Commission will finalize the plan based on input from the outreach sessions

Summary of Planning Work Already Accomplished

The N|150 process builds on planning work already accomplished. In particular, five reports from 2017 serve as a foundation for N|150:

- ❖ Student Matriculation Success Task Force (March 2017)
- ❖ Achieving Distinction Task Force (March 2017)
- ❖ Task Force on Budget Model (April 2017)
- ❖ Smart Enrollment Growth Task Force (April 2017)
- ❖ Diversity Mapping Report (September 2017)

Brief summaries of each report are included below, and complete copies of these reports are available on the N|150 website:

Student Matriculation Success Task Force

The Student Matriculation Success Task Force conducted research and SWOT analyses in five areas related to student retention, graduation and time to degree: 1) faculty, curriculum, and academic policies, 2) academic advising, 3) financial support, 4) predictive analytics and data, and 5) co-curricular and student support systems. Their recommendations called for:

- Systematic and coordinated university-wide onboarding processes and professional development for staff and faculty related to academic policies, data use, and best practices for student engagement;
- Timely and easy to use data collection templates and analytic tools to enable faculty and staff to access and use relevant data for informed, evidence-supported decisions about student success;
- Analysis and long-range planning regarding human resource needs within advising and student support programs to meet increased enrollment demands and support student success;
- Coordinated university-wide communications with faculty and staff about specific strategies and practices that they can use to support student success within their units;
- Development of new or expanded programs to support success rates for particular student cohorts;

- Curricular or pedagogical reform or innovation initiatives focused on student success; and for
- Reducing the impact of minor financial holds on student accounts while developing a system of increased monetary support for students with financial need.

The report also includes valuable resources such as a bibliography, links to exemplar efforts at peer institutions, and a list of extant data sources on student success at UNL.

Achieving Distinction Task Force

The task force examined the meaning of distinctiveness and how universities achieve such recognition through student-centered initiatives, research-based solutions to world problems, faculty awards, and national rankings. Their report identified areas in which UNL is already distinctive, examples of strengths, and areas of opportunity to become distinctive. The task force recommended developing campus-wide themes that:

1. Address a recognized grand challenge facing Nebraska and the world;
2. Integrate teaching, research and creative activity, extension and engagement;
3. Involve multi-disciplinary, multi-unit approaches to these challenges;
4. Emerge from a collaborative process involving faculty, staff and student stakeholders; and
5. Represent an area in which the university has specific capabilities and holds significant aspirations.

The report includes valuable resources including an analysis of existing strengths at UNL, a list of grand challenge research themes at other Big 10 universities, areas of research focus for the national academies and federal funding agencies, and detailed recommendations on UNL's most promising pathways to distinction in research, scholarship and creativity.

Task Force on Budget Model

The task force conducted a full review of UNL's existing budget system and examined budgeting systems utilized at peer institutions. The report analyzed the strengths and weaknesses associated with two approaches to budgeting and also included recommendations for recalibrating UNL's budgeting model.

The task force indicated that before any new budget model is developed or before the existing budget allocation model is revised UNL needs agreed-upon principles to guide the way decision makers allocate resources to the units on campus. They recommended the following principles:

- Support the values, mission and strategic vision of the University by aligning financial and operational resources with performance metrics for enrollment growth, efficient operations and the advancement of excellence in teaching, research, creative activity, outreach and engagement;
- Center the responsibility and accountability for the optimal use of human, financial, physical and operational resources in the academic and non-academic units, and empower those units to be entrepreneurial, collaborative, flexible and creative with resources;
- Allow for investments through resources held centrally that support interdisciplinary collaborations;
- Avoid duplication of effort and share services centrally or between units when appropriate;
- Utilize transparent, accountable, and strategic subsidization of units;
- Implement information management systems, based on common metrics, that provide timely, accurate and integrated financial, student, human resource and operational data;
- Develop financial processes in an inclusive manner; and
- Provide accessible and clear information that is simple to understand.

A modified 'Responsibility-Based Management' budgeting model could deliver these features and was therefore recommended by the task force. They noted that this model could be developed by a small

committee of campus leaders. Extensive context on UNL's current budget as well as analyses of budgeting systems in place at peer institutions are also included in their report.

Smart Enrollment Growth Task Force

The Smart Enrollment Growth Task Force examined UNL's enrollment management plans, researched opportunities for smart enrollment growth, and made recommendations on future enrollment targets.

The task force commended the benefits of defining, for the university community, the benefits of smart growth, which include: expanded educational opportunities, increased accessibility, a more diverse student body, amplification of UNL's role as an economic development engine for Nebraska, magnification of UNL's ability to support the economic revitalization of Nebraska communities, and creation of a larger alumni network that can promote the university's successes, help recruit students, and generate additional financial support.

When considering its growth, the task force also noted the need for UNL to strategically position itself in the market based on quality, affordability, and the hallmarks of the university that make UNL distinctive and compelling. The task force recommended that the enrollment growth projections be revised to a total enrollment level of 30,600 by 2025.

To accomplish this goal, the task force noted the need to develop a strong, comprehensive, and cohesive brand strategy. They also noted the need for a budget model that rewards colleges and departments/units for enrollment growth and academic performance, as well as they need to pursue a focused strategy of enrollment growth instead of attempting to grow many programs at the same time. To attain rapid enrollment growth, UNL needs to create new or updated programs and degrees more quickly while ensuring a high quality student experience. Accomplishing this will require a stronger partnership with the University of Nebraska Foundation and Alumni Association as well as an inclusive process of planning for the university's future.

Diversity Mapping Report

From Spring 2017 through Summer 2017, Halualani & Associates conducted a diversity mapping of University of Nebraska-Lincoln that examined its diversity activities and efforts. The study found:

- UNL has produced a solid record of diversity activity and efforts in the last five years, which constitutes a foundational base from which to further build diversity and inclusion; and
- One standout leverage point in place at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is its curricula (undergraduate and graduate), including rich course offerings created by talented faculty members.

The report also called for:

- Creating a university-wide diversity strategic plan that fundamentally includes diversity;
- Continued progress on recruitment and retention of diverse undergraduate and graduate students from all minority groups;
- Continued progress on student retention and graduation for diverse groups;
- Recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff;
- Professional development on diversity-related topics for staff, faculty, and administrators; and
- Further development of diversity-based affinity groups for employees.

The report includes rich analyses of curricula, syllabi, and detailed course content throughout the university, as well as specific recommendations for actions to be taken over the next five years that will promote diversity and inclusion throughout the university.